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C O N F I D E N T I A L MAPUTO 000313

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE
FOR AF/S - HTREGER
MCC FOR GAULL AND HARRINGTON
E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2010
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [MZ](#) [FRELIMO](#)
SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE: GUEBUZA REPLACES CHISSANO AS FRELIMO
PARTY PRESIDENT

REF: MAPUTO 00146

Classified By: Ambassador Helen La Lime for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

1. (U) On March 4, FRELIMO's Central Committee announced that former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano had voluntarily stepped down from his post as president of the ruling FRELIMO party. Shortly thereafter, Mozambique's newly-elected President Armando Guebuza was named his successor by the 177-member FRELIMO Central Committee. The move is in keeping with FRELIMO's history of filling the post of party president with the current head of state, a practice in place since the country's independence in 1975. Though no formal announcement has been made, a March 5 press report indicated that Guebuza would also retain his post as party secretary general, at least for the time being.

2. (C) However, contrary to press reports that Chissano offered to resign, a source in the Central Committee told post that the Committee meeting was "bitter" and that the Guebuza camp ultimately forced Chissano's hand. According to the source, Chissano was convinced to step down only after several long, heated discussions with FRELIMO heavyweights, including party founder Marcelino dos Santos and party ideologue Jorge Rebelo.

Comment

3. (SBU) As Chissano is Mozambique's first ex-president (his predecessor, Samora Machel, died in a plane crash), it was not entirely clear before he left office whether he would retain the party presidency. Although the president of the party does not hold veto power over the 15-member FRELIMO Political Commission (the ruling body of the Central Committee), this person plays the lead role in its deliberations. With President Guebuza now president of FRELIMO, he has a much freer hand in governing Mozambique than if Chissano had remained FRELIMO president. End Comment.
LALIME